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The Participation Forum*

February 27, 1997

Topic: Aligning the Purposes of Multiple Donors and Partners Madagascar's Second Environmental Plan

In the twenty-first Participation Forum, two key players in the development of Madagascar's second environmental plan spoke in the first person about the lessons learned in what was a very broad participatory process. The two were Lisa Gaylord of the Madagascar mission and Michel Simeon of the World Bank's Africa regional office. Also participating was Phyllis Forbes, Deputy Assistant Administrator for PPC, who was involved in the earlier stages of the processes of donor collaboration and listening to customers as mission director in Madagascar six years ago.

Participants were asked to consider how the Madagascar experience spoke to such fundamental questions as: Does a collaborative participatory process result in better planning and decision making; and can collaboration among international and national institutions help empower the people of the country?—Diane La Voy, Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

What Participation Really Looks Like

Phyllis Forbes

Madagascar always has held a place in the hearts of people who care about our environment because it has such unique flora and fauna, and people are so concerned about preserving it. When I went out as mission director, the World Bank was beginning what would become the precursor to an Africa-wide effort: to prepare a joint donor-government environmental action plan. The Africa Bureau was supportive of this experimental effort. In the beginning, we didn't know what a participatory environmental program would look like. When I arrived in Madagascar, the government had just refused outright the Duke grant. This was a big problem because USAID/Washington expected us to

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The Participation Forum is a series of monthly noontime meetings for USAID personnel to explore how to put into practice the Administrator's mandate to "build opportunities for participation into the development processes in which we are involved" ("Statement of Principles on Participatory Development," November 16, 1993). Guest speakers from in and outside of USAID describe their experiences and enter into a general discussion of the theme of the session. A summary of the meeting is disseminated within USAID by E-mail, and readers are encouraged to engage in an E-mail dialogue. E-mail should be directed to Diane La Voy, using either the USAID directory or INTERNET, as DLAVOY@USAID.GOV. Printed copies of the Forum summaries will be distributed to participants and attendees from outside of USAID and others interested in participatory development. The Office of Health and Nutrition's Environmental Health Project (EHP) arranges logistics, maintains the mailing list, and prepares the Forum summaries.

obligate the money in the next few months. So I went to see the government official who had refused to approve the grant. I thought he was going to be terrible, but he said to me, “Well, madam, this is the first I have seen of this grant, and if we're supposed to be working together, I want a chance to take a look at it.” That seemed to make a lot of sense. Ultimately, the grant was strengthened.

I tell that story because at the time, everybody thought we *were* engaged in a participatory process. But now that we *are actually* engaged in it, we have discovered what participation really means. For example, in a mid-course meeting of the SAVEM Project (Sustainable Approaches to Viable Environmental Management), which has beenone of USAID/Madagascar's flagship environmental projects, all of the Malagasies who were interested in the environment practically shouted us out of the room. That gave us an inkling that things were not on a good track. We went back and asked them, “What is this? What would you like to see?” These questions invited deeper involvement than just asking, “What trees do you want planted?” or “What way do you want to save the lemurs?” Participation is involving people intimately in the development of a program or action plan.

Planning for EP2: A Participatory Process

Lisa Gaylord

I have been working with the National Environmental Action Plan for going on seven years. The participatory process of developing the plan was not just a one-shot effort, but a process that went on for two years.

The Problem and the Response

Madagascar is an economy largely based on renewable natural resources. A high level of environmental degradation due to soil erosion and deforestation is threatening the country's rich biodiversity. There are three primary causes: population increase, poverty, and the low level of agricultural technology, which results in extensive use of slash and burn methods—probably one of the primary pressures being put on the country's natural resource base.

In 1987, the Madagascar government prepared the first National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), which resulted in the promulgation of an environmental charter in December of 1990. Since this was the first environmental action plan in Africa, it put Madagascar at the forefront. In 1991 the NEAP was launched.

The NEAP is divided into three five-year phases. EP1, which was just completed at the end of 1996, was the first five-year phase. The next five-year phase, EP2, will go to the year 2001. During this phase the experiences and lessons learned in EP1 will be consolidated and deepened. EP3 will mainstream environmental activities.

Features of the Participatory Process

In developing EP2, the government has been in the driver's seat, pushing the program forward. There were intensive national preparation efforts. In contrast, the SAVEM Project was designed by a USAID design team.

The key design feature of EP2 was that it moved from a project to a program approach. EP1 consisted of a conglomeration of projects, sponsored not only by USAID but also by other donors. In EP2 we were looking for coherence and synergy in an overall program. The program approach was

characterized by a common vision and consensus on priorities, a strong annual programming process, consolidated monitoring, and joint pre-appraisals and appraisals. However, there has been no attempt to consolidate disbursement and procurement.

EP2 was designed in an intensive, highly participatory national process, starting with a national workshop in the fall of 1994, and followed by a steering committee meeting of donors and all Malagasy counterparts to validate major options, and a beneficiary assessment to find out whether or not beneficiaries from all levels—farmers up through government agencies—felt that EP1 had met its overall objectives.

In April of 1995, an international scientific workshop, attended by over 120 scientists, both Malagasy and international, identified the conservation and research priorities. That was followed by a six-month PPDOP (participatory process for the definition of options and priorities) for biodiversity conservation. The PPDOP identified the problems and options for conserving biodiversity. Regional priority-setting workshops were also held.

Effect of USAID Re-engineering Process

While the PPDOP process was going on, USAID was in a reengineering mode. In Madagascar, planning for EP2 and reengineering came together and fit like a glove. The participatory process in Madagascar was fully in line with the USAID reengineering principles: customer focus, teamwork, participation. The mission was able to bring the two together; they were not separate processes. While we were participating in bringing together the Malagasy agencies, international and national NGOs, and partners in planning EP2, we were at the same time pushing forward the reengineering process.

Beneficiary Assessments

One of the key activities of the participatory process was the beneficiary assessment. It was a four-month qualitative study carried out by five different local research firms. There were over 50 evaluators and close to 2,000 in-depth interviews. These took place both at the field level and at the institutional level, because EP1 had looked at institution building.

As in any type of participatory process, there were problems of coordination and communication in the beneficiary assessment and lack of understanding of what the evaluators were looking for. It was difficult to get across the idea that the study was a constructive assessment, not an evaluation. The assessment team did not want to be critical of what had been done, but wanted to move forward. People were not always willing to give the information required because they thought that if they hadn't done something well, it would be a mark against them. Another problem was that some operators working in the field were somewhat possessive of their protected area, so when the evaluators tried to talk to them, they were not always received with open arms.

On the other hand, one of the benefits of the beneficiary assessment was that, for the first time, managers knew how the beneficiaries perceived the project. Sometimes these perceptions weren't very positive. Some key Malagasy institutions felt defensive when a beneficiary would say that what ANGAP, the national park service, had done was not really what they wanted.

The draft beneficiary assessment reports were a mechanism for clarifying certain misunderstandings. They were used as planning tools as we moved into finalizing the EP2 design, which was finished just as we were going into a final multi-donor appraisal mission.

Decentralization and Local Participation

The government's decentralization plans were taken into account in the development of EP2. Over the two-year time period, various conventions took place to look at the issues of local participation: the National Convention on Local Governance, the Convention on Human Settlements in Protected Areas, and the National Convention on Local Community Management of Renewable Resources. As a result of this process, local community management of natural renewable resources became an integral

underpinning of EP2. Local communities were empowered to take responsibility for the management of natural resources.

Defining Options and Priorities

Over a period of five to six months, a participatory process was carried out to define options and priorities. The international scientific workshop on biodiversity defined the conservation priorities, but several questions remained: What were the other key priorities? On what activities should EP2 focus? Answers to these questions were sought at different levels: the local level, the multi-local level, and the national level. A series of workshops were held in which local leaders discussed the problems they were having in the utilization of natural resources and set priorities for EP2.

The objectives of the priority-setting workshops were to inform the regions on the nature of the EP2 proposal, to foster debate with regional representatives, and to inform donors what the priorities were in the different regions.

At the national level, workshops were held to take the information coming out of the regional workshops and decide on overall priorities.

Lessons from the Priority-Setting Workshops

The priority-setting workshops revealed that NEAP was not widely known. Particularly at the local level, communication was needed. The participatory process in and by itself was a mechanism for making NEAP better known. It also enabled us to employ a program rather than a project approach. It made clear that we were moving forward as a national program. Also, it fostered a team spirit and active participation.

As a point of clarification, when I have used the word “we,” I don't mean “we” as USAID or “we” as donors. I mean “we” collectively: all the partners working together in Madagascar.

Outcomes of the Process

Michel Simeon

EP2 Program Structure

EP2 includes a large number of activities. The bulk of the resources have intentionally been allocated for field operations. We tried to minimize the amount of resources not going to concrete actions in the field.

The operations themselves can be divided into two groups. One is the group of subsector components: forest management, protected areas, soil and water conservation, coastal zone management, urban management. This group is the normal continuation of EP1 and is a direct reflection of what the national agencies have prepared. However, during the preparation and appraisal process, the idea developed that something was missing. That something became the so-called regional programming and local management component, which cuts across all the activities. This component provides support to regional programming and decentralization through a regional development fund.

In addition to operations, there are strategic and support activities. Strategic activities continue efforts started in EP1 to formulate strategies, policies, norms, and regulations and to put mechanisms in place for carrying out environmental impact assessments. Support activities include research, information systems, monitoring and evaluation, and program coordination. We tried to keep these activities as limited as we could, but it was hard.

From Projects to a Program

The main result of the participatory appraisal process was to transform a number of fairly independent pieces into a coherent whole. Each agency had prepared its proposal for EP2. Sixteen proposals were the starting point of the joint appraisal process, plus what came out of the PPDOP.

The process proved to be an effective tool to improve program design through a better understanding of participants and their perceptions. It was a level partnership based on mutually defined goals, activities, and ways of interacting with one another.

Regional Programming and Local Management

One key design feature resulting from all these participatory activities is the component on regional programming and local management. New legislation supporting this component will make it possible for the government to give back the management of natural resources—like a piece of forest or a piece of coastal zone—to local communities within a framework of some formal agreement, including a management plan. The communities will be responsible for the resource but they will also reap the benefits from it. The hope is, of course, that they will do a better job in managing these resources for the long term.

Local management of natural resources will be implemented together with a new way of looking at land tenure and land-use security, beginning with making inventories of traditional rights and formalizing the limits of the village area. The land tenure administration will come forward and propose a new methodology. Because land tenure officials know it's not the full answer to the problem, under EP2 there will be a large-scale participatory process again, to redefine land-tenure policies in the country.

In Madagascar, as in many other places, 80 or 90 percent of the land officially belongs to the government, but government management is certainly not the long-term solution. Nor is it how most people in the villages think the land should be managed. This has to change. And it's a highly political, sensitive subject. Change can take place only through building a new consensus at all levels.

Disseminating Information under EP2

Communication hopefully will receive more importance in EP2 than in EP1, where, for some financial reasons, not enough was done. A fair amount of work has been done in formulating a comprehensive communication strategy which will directly support participation at various levels.

Today most people are aware of environment problems. That was not necessarily the case five or eight years ago. The environment has also become a very visible political issue, and, judging by the way various ministries have been fighting over which will be responsible for the environment, it has become part of the system. That has some negative implications, but it's also positive compared with 10 years ago, when there was no constituency and no responsible institution for environmental programs.

Implementation Arrangements

EP1 was implemented as a conglomeration of projects. Now, as EP2 begins, we will try to make it more of a program. This will be difficult because it goes against both the Malagasy and the donors' established way of doing things.

The key feature of the program approach is the consolidation of the annual programming process and the monitoring system. This means that every donor that is funding an EP2 activity has an obligation to participate in the annual programming process as well as to make sure that the monitoring information will flow into a consolidated system. This is not a trivial requirement, but it can be met if all donors work together at all stages. In December 1995, a joint multi-donor appraisal mission of EP2, with 70 people representing over ten donors, worked closely with over 50 Malagasy counterparts interviewing and refining the EP2 program document. The donors then participated in the EP2 negotiations held in September 1996 in Paris, where all the conditionalities and key features were

agreed with all the donors together. It was not the World Bank and Madagascar or USAID and Madagascar, but it was all the donors.

There will be no attempt to consolidate what is cast in iron in terms of disbursement and procurement procedures, which are the most difficult to change. But we can go a long way with consolidation without having to change them.

The key implementation arrangement is the multi-donor secretariat. Experience has shown that it's very important for NEAP to have an entity that can manage public relations and problem solving on a permanent basis. During EP1 a person from the World Bank functioned as the full time secretariat, and everybody agreed that it had been useful and that in EP2 the secretariat should not be just a World Bank activity, but everybody's activity. Five different donors have joined their resources to finance a team of two that we call the multi-donor secretariat.

Work Plans and Budgets

Workplans and budgets are also key to EP2 implementation. Each donor will continue to have its own financing agreement with the government. All the agreements will then be formalized as framework agreements at the level of all the agencies, with the annual work plan and budget as key elements. This means that every year there will be a work plan and a budget centered on every component or activity in the program, instead of on every donor in the program. This is not a compulsory process. It will work only as long as everybody plays the game.

We are trying to develop the first annual work plan and budget. The first draft in November 1996 was far from perfect. A lot of problems arose because some donors had not fully defined what they wanted to contribute. Some donors have more flexibility than others. We tried to bring out into in the open in joint discussions all the issues that typically create problems, such as how much technical assistance would be provided. Obviously, the national agencies and the donors have different opinions on that. We tell the donors that the claims of the national agencies are legitimate and the national agencies that the claims of the donors to promote their own expertise are also legitimate. Only the future will tell us how well the work plan and budgeting process will work.

Discussion Session

Communications, Lessons, and Trust

Andrew Watson (Development Alternatives): For close to three years during EP1, I was with the KEPEM Project (Knowledge and Effective Policies for Environmental Management), the other USAID/Madagascar flagship environmental project. I'd be curious to know how you think the lessons learned in Madagascar can be extended to other countries. As Lisa pointed out, Madagascar's Environmental Action Plan was probably the first in Africa. Certain countries, Uzbekistan, for example, have jumped right into drawing up local environmental action plans and are at the same stage as Madagascar. Other countries, Cambodia, for example, are still at the stage Madagascar was about eight years ago. Cambodia's national environmental action plan is mostly boilerplate. Is there any way for lessons pertaining to the basic participatory approach to be extended to other countries?
Lisa Gaylord: Even within Madagascar, various integrated conservation development projects could learn lessons from one another. How do we know if they are pulling out the lessons learned from different experiences and ensuring that the same mistakes will not be made again?

Within USAID we don't communicate enough, to exchange lessons learned. For example, the parallels between the Madagascar and Uganda programs are tremendous, yet there has been little dialogue between the two missions. That's just one donor. Beyond that, we must exchange lessons

among all donors. USAID has to make more of an effort to increase communication among countries in the process of developing national environmental action plans.

Michel Simeon: To me the most important and the most difficult lesson from a donor's point of view is that we have to refrain from taking the lead too much, so that the countries can run their own programs. The more people are involved, the more likely it is that important things will not get forgotten or overlooked.

Lisa Gaylord: Two things to be learned from Madagascar are important. One is the personal relationships that were established among people working in the environment. It's a lot easier to communicate when you have good personal relationships. Some of the lessons learned in Madagascar would not be applicable in places where a high level of trust has not been developed. Because a level of trust between the Malagasy institutions and the donors has been established over the last five years, we have been able to apply a participatory process to develop a coherent program.

The second lesson is that we fool ourselves if we believe that we can coordinate without the strong involvement of the government that we're working with. If we don't have the cooperation and full participation of the government from the beginning, if they don't believe that NEAP it is theirs—as it rightfully should be—then NEAP won't go anyplace.

Diane La Voy: Each donor agency has different ways of learning internally. This forum is one way that USAID has. We tell each other about experiences within a technical area, such as the environment, that has particular needs and lessons. Obviously the Environmental Center in the Global Bureau also has a role to play in promoting learning.

Lindsey Orkand: Are you saying that in an agency as sophisticated as you say USAID is, there is no central place where a person going out to Madagascar could read about all the different programs everywhere else?

Lisa Gaylord: It does seem like a very obvious thing. But in most cases, people get briefed before they go out. They know generally what's going on, but we are internally organized and don't look at what other donors are doing as part of what we're doing. In the new reengineered programming system, we try to recognize these things in the results framework. (In the old “log-frame,” what other donors are doing were among the “externalities.”)

John Lewis: We still have a dichotomy between USAID missions and other donors. Most donors do not empower their missions as USAID does. Missions need to add Washington people to their virtual teams and hold them accountable for bringing in the decision-making levels of the other donors who are not in the field (we need to stop pretending that they are) but are back in headquarters, where they will remain.

Cathryn Thorup: Many of us that feel that sharing information within the agency is one of our most critical challenges. Because of reduction in funds, USAID is able to put much less money into training than is necessary to keep pace with developments going on in the wider development community. For example, the USAID Development Studies Program was a very effective tool for sharing information and building the training and expertise of our professionals. We should take another look at that. Second, we need to look at some new techniques, for example, a twinning process in which specific types of contact between the Madagascar and Uganda missions would be encouraged. Several sets of missions could be identified. A third way would be to institute a program of peer assists with incentives for initiating or responding to requests for assistance from one mission to another. It would be part of people's work plans and something that they would be evaluated on.

Also, we should encourage much more travel from mission to mission such as that connected with the New Partnerships Initiative (NPI). We are putting the NPI Resource Guide on the agency’s web site. It will be available not only to USAID but also to USAID partners.

John McMahon: The budget crisis in USAID goes beyond just not being able to participate in technical meetings. Because the OE crisis is so critical, we increasingly are being driven to sharing our

expertise and experiences via the Internet, as opposed to on-the-ground verification of what's going on. This seriously undermines the cutting edge of the technical capability of this agency.
Michel Simeon: All the implementing agencies of the Madagascar program are on the Internet. They're in the process of building a shared environmental information system on the Web.

Carrot and Stick

John Lewis: In other parts of Africa, the principal lesson learned was not only the importance of a positive-reinforcement process, which is well packaged by the NEAP methodology. But I didn't see anything about the negative reinforcement—the stick, not the carrot. The lesson learned from West Africa is that for environmental management to kick in, the right land-tenure policies and the right agroforestry technical packages must be in place. We must be transparent about the criteria on which local environmental management programs will be measured. Then if they don't perform, they get only half as much money the next time around. As long as every donor sticks with that deal, the message will be loud and clear. But there are a million ways around that and donors that don't like to be held to such conditions. But that is the bottom line on making the process work: the minute a locality that's performing gets a little bit more money and a locality that isn't performing gets less money from every donor, then environmental management programs will begin to work.

Relationships Among Donors

Michel Simeon: In Madagascar, there are about 10 different donors, including large NGOs like the World Wildlife Fund. The relationship among donors will work only if it's voluntary and if the donors feel that they have ownership in the joint product. Coordination means making sure that everybody has a stake and a say. It's not that one tells the others what to do. That never works.

In Madagascar, once the agencies had produced the 16 reports, we came in for the appraisal. Seventy-five people participated. They were divided into groups. Each group was headed by somebody from a different donor. When people in the World Bank office here in Washington ask me about the design of the forestry component of NEAP, I have to say that I don't know because I wasn't in that group. The appraisal process for the forestry part was led by the Germans; the appraisal process for the protected areas part was led by the U.S.A.; the appraisal process for the soil conservation part was led by the Swiss. Everybody had a stake in the ownership of the end product. Because trust developed, it could work that way. I don't know whether it would work the same way in another country with a different set of people.
John McMahon: I've been involved in a lot of different donor coordination activities, everything from ag research, to environment, to ag sector. My general reaction is that donor coordination is never as effective as one would like you to believe. However, it's absolutely critical.

The Madagascar experience has been positive. You're at the second phase of NEAP. You've weathered changes in government and different variations of the NEAP process: government-led versus donor-pushed. You've been able to get broad participation on the part of the country at all levels in the NEAP and perhaps, more important, to mobilize tremendous amounts of donor resources to deal with environmental management. In the end, that's what it's all about. It's not just how many people have been involved along the way or what NEAP looks like, but whether or not money is flowing and an impact is being felt. I would strongly encourage you to document everything from participation to the importance of a sustained commitment on the part of the donors.

Impact of Political Change on the Participatory Process

Aseef Shaikh (International Resources Group): Madagascar went through a number of changes politically during EP1. How important are the domestic political process and domestic governance to the participatory process in NEAP?
Lisa Gaylord: The way NEAP was set up did not protect it from political changes in Madagascar. A certain level of autonomy within the executing agencies allowed them to move forward with their activities and to develop a level of trust with many different donors. Despite the fact that we went through five different ministries of Environment, Water, and Forest, a fabric of trust held together the executing agencies. While the overall coordinating body probably was the most jolted by political changes, they came through very much in the driver's seat. Mutual support among donors, NGOs, and other partners allowed NEAP to move forward and the participatory process to happen.

Certainly there will continue to be difficulties because of the lack of an overall national body responsible for putting in place the necessary policies, laws, and regulations to empower the communities. We don't yet have that at that national level, but it is still what we need. Hopefully during EP2 the political setting in Madagascar will be more stable.

Indicators for Participation

Jim Edgerton (World Bank): Those of us that have been working in the trenches in the Social Policy Unit of the World Bank (the participation unit) for the last five or six years, trying to introduce a participatory approach, have frequently looked to environmental champions as a model of how external pressure can be effectively applied to a big agency like the Bank to bring about change. As we at the Bank move beyond the rhetoric and the anecdotal stage to try to consolidate our gains, we realize that we need to assemble empirical evidence on the effectiveness and the ultimate impact of participatory approaches.

Michel Simeon said that the agencies involved in NEAP in Madagascar need to buy into not only the annual planning but also the monitoring process. I'm sure that the monitoring framework you've established includes financial and technical monitoring parameters to measure environmental impact. Have you managed to invent monitoring indicators that also measure the breadth and the intensity of participation so that over time we can assemble empirical evidence about the impact of the participatory approach against some sort of real or hypothetical baseline?
Diane La Voy: Before you answer may I ask you go into a little more depth on a couple of things you already said that might deal with this. Lisa, you mentioned that it was very timely that USAID was on the forefront of reengineering when NEAP was being developed. Also, Madagascar was a leading-edge mission with the NPI. Both of these efforts strike me as relevant to the issue of results and indicators. Was reengineering's explicit focus on results the ingredient that made it so relevant to the participatory development of NEAP?

Concerning the NPI, I know that Madagascar provided an excellent report, and the learning process of the NPI generated a number of indicators of partnership or of an increasing capacity to work together. Does this partly address Jim’s question?
Michel Simeon: As I mentioned earlier, consolidating the monitoring and evaluation system is a key feature of the program approach, as distinct from the project approach. A lot of effort has already gone into the design of the monitoring system. The first attempt in EP1 ended up with a monitoring system with 1,500 indicators—it was never operational, as you can imagine. So there was a lot of thinking to try to bring the list of indicators down to a reasonable level.

This process is still ongoing. There is now a reasonably short and convincing list of indicators that was discussed in the joint negotiations in September 1996 in Paris. But the work on the indicators is not finished because it's not clear how some of them will be measured and how the data will be produced. Establishing indicators involves not only producing information but also aiming at some quantitative target. Eventually all the agencies will be evaluated on how they have met their targets. At

the time of the mid-term review in two or three years, financial resource reallocations will depend in part on how well the monitoring system worked and how well the agencies met their targets.
Lisa Gaylord: The indicators are much more quantitatively than qualitatively oriented. More thought has to be given on how to look at the impact of participation in terms of our objectives. For example, one of the things that we want to measure is the creation of participatory community management plans. Also we're still trying to see how the work of key partners in NPI can be qualitatively measured in terms of building up the capacity of those associations.
Michel Simeon: Part of the answer will come from the beneficiary assessment that is planned within the next five years. That's another instrument to give us something back on this dimension of the proposal.
Karen Poe: From my perspective as Deputy Mission Director in Madagascar, the aspect of the Agency's reengineering that had an impact on the NEAP process was more than just the focus on results. All of the core values were the lens through which we looked at all of the activities in the second phase of NEAP. If an activity didn't fit within the core values, particularly empowerment and client focus, we knew we were off the track. We put ourselves through an intensive process of sharing our planning and our strategic frameworks with our implementing partners, our government partners, and our donor partners. This process set us back a year from being able to reach agreement on a strategic objective agreement for this, our flagship environmental program. But the result is much better. We have true ownership and empowerment of the Malagasy at all levels. We have a common vision. It's not an USAID program; it's a shared vision from the Malagasy implementing organizations, the government, and the donors. And that wouldn't have happened if we had focused exclusively on results.

The Participatory Process and USAID Procurement Policies

Helen Gunther: Now that we in the USAID mission in Madagascar are getting ready for implementation of NEAP, we have to deal with the fact that the USAID procurement system has not kept up with our participatory process. Trying to deal with this issue is a real struggle for us as a mission. For example, we are being told by the procurement office that we have been getting too many noncompetitive bids. One of the reasons for this is that we are getting an incredible number of unsolicited proposals from our NGO partners who have been working with us for the last five years in developing the new strategy. This is not surprising. They know what the NEAP is. They have come up with excellent proposals. Somehow, the two have got to meet. Until we fix the procurement part of the system, we, as an implementation and contracting agency, will have tremendous difficulties.
Diane La Voy*:* Helen's question about procurement is one that we've had and we will continue to have very much in our sights. About a year and a half ago, the Office of Procurement and the General Counsel pulled together interim guidance on consultation to get at the underlying problem that Helen has identified. As we engage partners up front as part of our strategic objective teams and as we are working with partners all along, we then have to make sure that we are, on the one hand, staying legal and not favoring one provider over another in some way, but, at the same time, recognizing that we don't want to fence people out of partnership with us in planning, thinking, and identifying approaches simply because they are then going to be implemented. USAID is struggling with this.
Michel Simeon: We have the same kind of situation in the World Bank. I can guarantee Helen that I have my fair share of problems with the system. We talk program and the system talks project; we talk partnership and they talk procurement. But one can argue for exceptions in a program like NEAP, and eventually the exceptions will become a precedent and they will contribute to changes in the system.

Participation Then and Now

Phyllis Forbes: When I think back to what I thought participation was in 1991 and what I think it is today, I'd have to pass the Grand Canyon, practically, to get from one side to the other. Six years ago, I thought participation was talking to somebody from the host country. Today, I'm wondering, why aren't we using the media to advertise things? Why aren't we having talk shows on local television about the issues of the environment? Why aren't we having national conventions?

In 1991, when I was working in Madagascar, speaking to each other openly could be quite dangerous because we were not in a democratic society. Democracy may not be well-rooted in a lot of countries we work in, but at least the press is freer, people can speak more openly, and they can have more opinions. If we hold back information, it is impossible for donor coordination to work. When we share information openly, donor coordination works.

We should be thinking differently about how we do development now that we have both the political and technological capacity to share information much more freely. We don't have to tiptoe around and suggest that maybe we could discuss ideas openly. We can in fact foster open debate. That's revolutionary for us and it is going to be revolutionary for a lot of the other donors we deal with. I'm sure the World Bank is used, as we are, to sitting down with the minister of X, and having a conversation about what program Y ought to be. However, a national convention on X could hold up, slow down, or in some way interrupt our appraisal missions, our timing, our rate of obligations, and all these other things that people get caught up in in their own organizations.

I leave here thinking that we've made tremendous advances, but we have a mind-set advance to get through next, which is that web sites on the Internet allow us to share information as rapidly between Amber Mountain and Antananarivo as it does now between Washington, D.C., and New York City. It's an amazing revolution.

Now we have elections in Madagascar, and soon politicians are going to care about what the populace thinks, because the populace will be electing them. And as people get more and more familiar with democracy and as political parties become more savvy, perhaps we, as developmental people, can actually put development issues on the political agenda so politicians would have to reveal where they stand on the environment.

There is also a move toward decentralization in Madagascar that we should strongly support. The people who are going to do the best job of preserving a protected area in Madagascar will be the people who live near that area.

Lisa Gaylord: While we have talked a lot today about working with people at the local level and trying to identify what their needs are, a lot of the participatory processes for designing the program still took place at the national level. Our big challenge in EP2 is how is participation going to happen effectively at the regional, the multi-local, and local level. And as we move toward multi-actors, how do we ensure that they talk to one another; how do we get the local government involved? That's the big challenge as we move this participatory process into EP2.

Communications from the E-Mail Bag

Eliene Augenbraun: Phyllis Forbes's comment that we can and should use mass media as part of our development program is right on. Participation with host country partners is critical. It takes longer and may cost more up front but I believe it is the only way to go. There are models for how to work in a participatory manner with host country media—community radios, USIA journalism programs are two examples. Even where development of media outlets is not the development goal per se, host country students, journalists, activists, and news directors are the best and most sustainable partners for developing messages that will be interpreted appropriately by our customers. Host country advertising firms may be very effective at reaching elites, but there is no reason to believe that they can develop messages targeted at the poor. In other words, choose your partners carefully and work with them over time, just like any other activity.

Concerning the use of the internet for working with out partners, I advocate including environmental web pages on USAID and other donor servers and REGISTERING THEM WITH SEARCH ENGINES. We should be careful not to lose opportunities to use available and simple technologies to disseminate information broadly.

Several patterns exist for using the internet in participatory ways. One is to meet someone in person and then maintain a personal relationship by email. A second way is to meet a group of people and then keep in contact with them by means of a listserve or newsgroup. Both of these methods can now be used by the elites in any country on earth. More high-tech but certain to be widely available throughout the world within the next five years is the World Wide Web. Several excellent environment web sites are available, including a commercial environmental news service (ENN), to get the word out efficiently to interested people. We need to understand what news is and how to package and disseminate it. At USAID we can work with LPA to use these new internet resources to get information where it needs to go.

Jim Tarrant: One of the "lessons" that have emerged from the ENI Bureau environment program applies to countries where public participation (either direct or through NGO proxies) is not exactly a tradition. In such places, designers of activities (i.e., "projects" in oldspeak) need to create structures in the design and implementation of the activity that require public inputs, rather than hoping they will happen. These can range from public participation in the scoping stage of environmental impact assessments, to land-use planning exercises, to the use of broad-based project coordinating or implementing committees, to the regular incorporation of public awareness and environmental education components as an integral part of an activity. Creating such structures requires imagination and getting out of the bureaucratic straitjacket.